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A REPLY

TO

A PAMPHLET

ENTITLED

REFLECTIONS

ADAPTED TO

THE PRESENT TIMES,

"Hear all, and then, let Justice hold the scale."

OTWAY.

London:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR;
AND SOLD BY J. MORSEY, PORTSEA,

1795.

A REPLY

A PARAPHRASE

OF

RELATIONS

AND

THE TIMES



WAY.

PRINTED FOR THE PROPRIETOR
AND SOLD BY J. BARNARD, LONDON

1801

A REPLY, &c.

FELLOW COUNTRYMEN,

HAVING perused a pamphlet which has lately appeared, entitled "Reflections adapted to the present Times;" the production of the pen of the pensioned Mr. Peter, of Portsea; written, as I could pledge myself to prove, from mere mercenary motives; and calculated entirely to mislead, inflame and vilify, as the writings of such men in general are; I feel myself compelled to address you, by way of answer, to so vile and shameful a production.

When men, endowed with talents, and of ability to inform and render instruction to others, become so far lost to a sense of virtue, and common honesty, as to employ the abilities bestowed

on them, in endeavouring to impose on the understandings of their countrymen, and to traduce the characters and intentions of those, who are seeking, by lawful means, to promote their welfare and happiness, it indicates the utmost depravity of heart; and discloses a design, as dangerous to the interests of society, as ever was conceived by the most dark and deformed mind.—

That the author of the pamphlet alluded to has used every artifice to delude his countrymen, and by malicious insinuations, to heap odium upon those who have hitherto proved themselves to be actuated by the purest motives, must be so evident to every man of discernment, that to advance any argument to demonstrate it seems almost offering an insult to their understandings.

The grand aim of “*this virtuous son of Britain*” (for so he would have you believe him) appears, by his pamphlet, to be the support of our *immaculate* and *infallible* ministers, and to defend the *principle* of the two obnoxious Bills now pending in Parliament. It is therefore not in the least extraordinary, that it should be of the nature it is. For my own part, I must confess I should have been much surprised to have found it otherwise. But I must own that when I was informed of a pamphlet being written and published by
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Mr. Peter, on the subject he has treated, I expected to find some shew of argument, at least, in it, if there was none in reality ; but in my expectations on this head I have been much disappointed. It is, I will venture to pronounce, altogether a weak and flimsy performance, devoid of all reasoning whatever ; but yet full of bold, impudent, and malevolent assertions, and the most inflammatory sentiments. No man merits the title of Patriot less than the author ; unless political depravity entitles him to that sacred appellation. That regard for Constitutional Liberty, he apparently professed when he wrote his " *Strictures on the Principles of Paine* ;"—all that veneration he then professed for the character of a Hampden, or a Locke, he has now totally laid aside ; and having enlisted under the banners of a corrupt party, and received the wages of his apostacy, he is lending a helping hand to undermine the fabric he pretends to revere, in order to establish on its ruins a system, at the idea of which the mind revolts with horror and indignation.

The fulsome strain of adulation on the Constitution with which the author introduces the subject of his pamphlet must, even to the most fervent admirer of that system of government, be disgusting and odious ; and must manifest, instantaneously, the design of the writer.

That the British Constitution, as established at the Revolution of 1688, merits every eulogium, I am proud to acknowledge. But to say (with Mr. Peter) that it has been handed down to us, to the present age, pure and unpolluted, is to me the language either of a knave, a fool, or a madman; and such as Mr. Pitt himself never yet ventured to pronounce in the height of any of his political deliriums.

Can that Constitution, I would ask, be pure and unpolluted, which has its most material branches under the immediate influence and controul of a minister—where the greater part of the members of the legislature is paid or pensioned by the government—and under which a set of paunch-bellied, muddle-headed, impious ecclesiastics are rolling in luxury and profusion, whilst the poor peasant, who toils and drudges for these mercile's men, is frequently without a crust to allay the cravings of his offspring? Can such a Constitution as this, I ask (without enumerating more of its abuses) be pure and unpolluted? That it is, Mr. Peter ventures boldly to assert—and with him that is sufficient. How refined must his notions of purity be! How exact! How much resembling his political conduct! He might as well have said at once, that the system was all perfection—that the present administration was the most virtuous that ever existed
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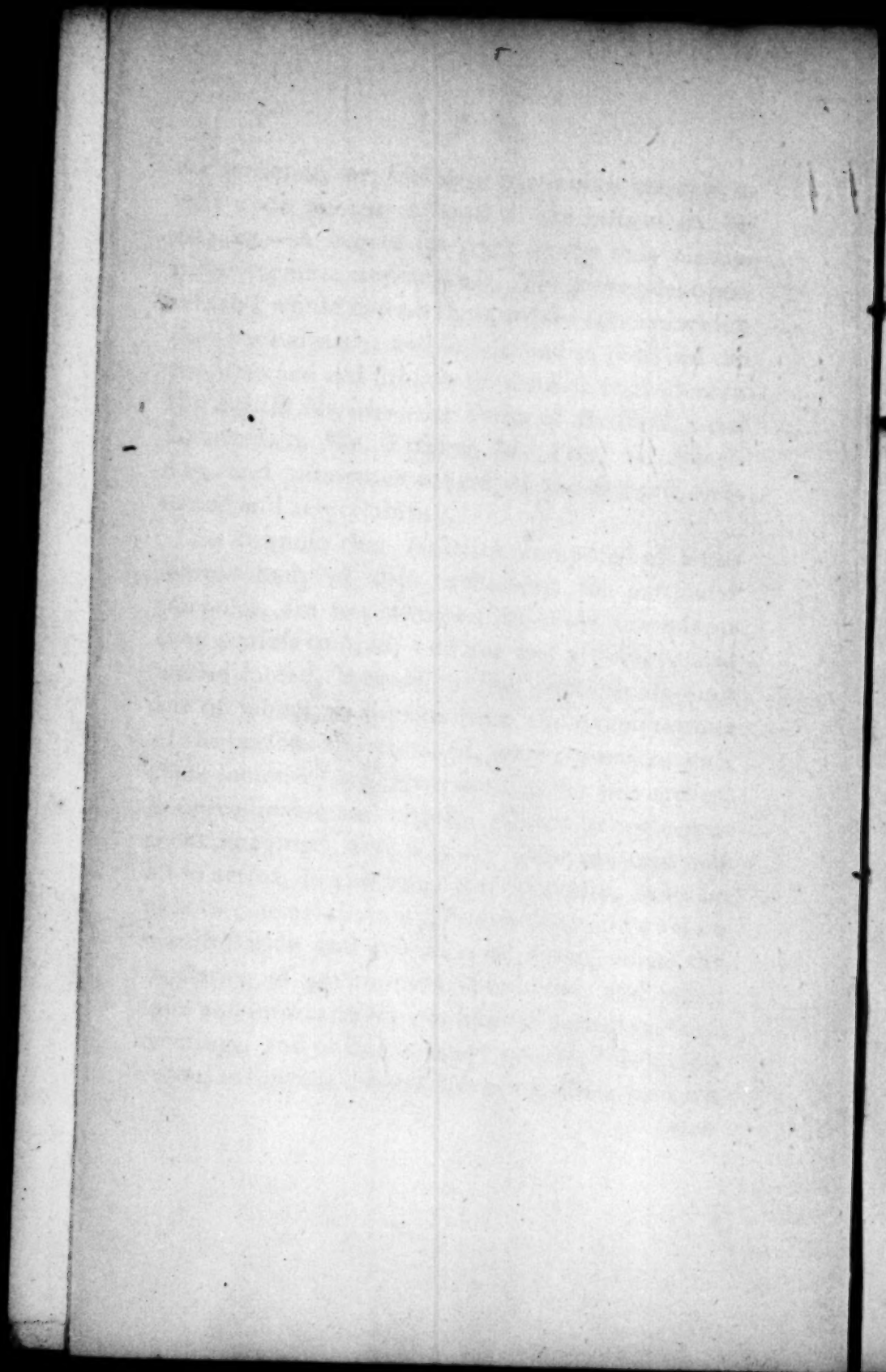
under it—that their only object is the welfare of the people, who are as good and happy as mild government and just laws can render them—and that, with the exception of the members of Jacobinical Societies, and a few other mal-contents, the nation are in the height of contentment, and esteem themselves completely blest. If this language were held out by him, it could not be considered less extravagant than that which he has used. Had he been more moderate in his praises he might have avoided being so easily and soon detected in his designs. But, as Lavater remarks, when men's intentions and their words vary, by the latter, if they are attended to, the former may be always discovered.

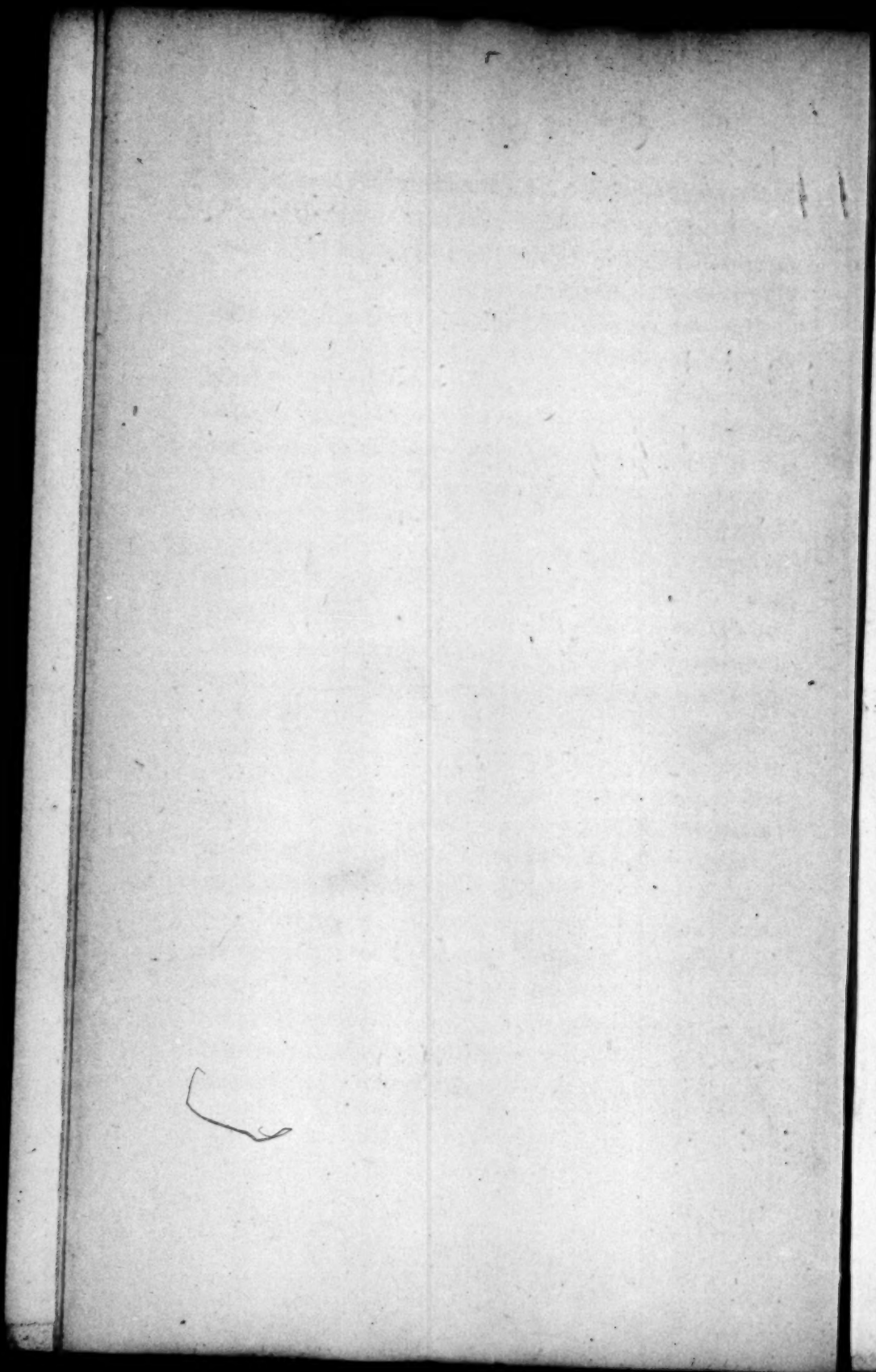
The principal object of the attack made by the author of the almost unparalleled Reflections under consideration, is the system of the Corresponding Societies; and in this he has undoubtedly succeeded as far as malignity and falsehood would carry him. Believe me I am not a member of these societies, nor ever was.—The only society to which I belong is that great society whose interests it will ever be my endeavour to support, and of which, I must own Mr. Peter a member also: though I disclaim his conduct towards it, as unworthy the name of a social being. I cannot, therefore, be personally affected by his

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malevolence, or feel any particular interest to take upon me the defence of the institutions he attacks.—A regard for truth is the only motive inducing me to undertake it. The principles upon which I would defend them are the same on which they have already, and so deservedly, received the countenance and support of the first characters in the British Nation—the Duke of Bedford, Lord Lauderdale, Mr. Erskine, Mr. Fox, Mr. Sheridan, and numerous others of the greatest eminence and respectability.

To suppose that societies, composed of a numerous body of men, associated for particular purposes, are not actuated by those sentiments they profess to hold, and are not peaceably and well-disposed, because a few individuals (not one of whom, as appears from the examinations of the persons apprehended, were connected with these societies) may have been guilty of excesses, is unreasonable and unjust. Can it be for a moment imagined, that so many thousand men are all so artful, so cunning, and so crafty, as to be able to conceal their real sentiments, and avoid a manifestation and detection of them, when the vigilance of government is so great, and when spies and informers are constant attendants at their meetings, and posted in every quarter? It is ridiculous to suppose it—and more impossible for such
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parliaments, profligate administrations, extravagant princes, and expensive wars were (though we were not able to see it) the causes of all the liberties and privileges we enjoy.

But all this is impossible; and so Mr. Peter himself would readily argue, if it would any way answer his purpose. His knowledge of existing abuses and their effects must be as great as that of any other man; and the proper means of remedying them must as naturally suggest themselves to his mind. Can it, therefore, be for a moment doubted that his attack on the Corresponding Societies was any other than the effects of deliberate malice—that the aspersions which he has thrown out against them are unjust, that his pamphlet was intended to impose upon men's understandings, and that his sole views are to support the existence of those very abuses, as necessary to preserve in power those men whom he must be conscious, from their actions in regard to himself, are as profligate and abandoned as it is possible for men in their situations to be?

As to any suspicion which may arise in the mind of any one that the societies may swerve from their declarations, I must observe, that it really ought, from a regard to the national character, to be shaken entirely off. For shall we believe,

believe, which we must do in order to ground such suspicions, that Britons are become so degenerate and faithless, that some hundred thousand men are not to be credited upon their solemn declaration? It is impossible.—Placemen, pensioners, and alarming associators may reduce their doubts, in their own wild imaginations, to certainties, and quivering and quaking for their places and their pensions, attempt to keep up a system of alarm as long as they think proper; but I trust their idle and groundless fears *for the safety of the constitution*, will not influence others; and that (whatever they may think) so large a portion of our countrymen will never be suspected of so much dissimulation, and of holding the evil intentions attributed to them, without just and sufficient evidence of such duplicity.

Mr. Peter has very properly dwelt much upon the horrid scenes which have lately been exhibited in a neighbouring nation. This most certainly was very suitable to his purpose. He was well assured that it would alarm weak and timid minds, and he hoped, by these means, to make some converts to the infamous cause he has espoused. That the origin of all the disorders in that country is to be attributed to clubs and affiliated societies, I will not now contend against; if I were my pamphlet would swell beyond its intended

tended bulk. I cannot, however, help remarking, that if it is from clubs the evils proceeded which the French have endured, it is not from those in general spoken of, but, as Mr. Sheridan some few days since observed, from the club of Pilnitz, and the combination of despots there entered into to annihilate the consequence of the French nation, and reduce them to their former state of misery and wretchedness. Another cause of their evils, I must observe, was that peculiarity in their character which a sudden emancipation from the bonds of a cruel slavery must naturally have produced.

I come now to Mr. Peter's grand questions—Hath not your constitution a king, lords and commons? Are not their powers equipoised by the most consummate wisdom that ever framed laws for the security of every individual? *Risum teneatis.* By way of answer I must beg leave to refer to the history of Boroughs, and to *Ryder's View of the British Constitution*, published annually in red covers.

“ And doth not that glorious fabric support on its broad base the meanest of Britain's sons?” In its pristine purity I am satisfied that it will: but that it does not, at present, I am well convinced: and for proof I appeal to the industrious poor throughout the country. The two questions

tions put afterwards, are insults to our misfortunes.

In respect to the two Bills now pending in parliament, I must remark thus much, that if political societies and meetings are necessary, which, after what I have advanced, I leave to the well-meaning man to reflect on, those bills must be unjust and oppressive. But admitting for a moment that these societies and meetings were ever so dangerous, it ought not to be the ground for ministers to rob us of the Freedom of Speech and the Liberty of the Press, the only remaining sureties against the attacks of arbitrary power and injustice. These bills must, therefore, in every point of view, be cruel and oppressive. They are in direct opposition to Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights, and are therefore a subversion of the British Constitution. To petition and remonstrate against them in the strongest terms the English language will allow, is the duty of every individual; and though Mr. Peter may think proper to criticise on *forms* of which he himself is the supporter, and artfully insinuate that 9 out of 10 of those who have signed petitions against the measures, were unacquainted with their nature, he cannot lessen their weight or consequence. I would here ask him (if the question be not of too delicate a nature to admit of

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of solution) if 80 out of 100 who have signed a certain counter petition, would have placed to it their signatures if solicitations, threats and force had not been employed to induce or compel them to it ?

To find Mr. Peter, in one part of his pamphlet, expatiating on the distresses of the poor, at first seems somewhat extraordinary. But mark his design—the defence of our virtuous ministers!—In order to this he ascribes the high price of corn to the tricks of the farmers and factors, and the millers; quite forgetful that effects cannot be produced without causes, and that though the farmers, &c. which, in the main, I deny, are the immediate occasion of the present extravagant price of that article, if first causes were reverted to, they would be found to exist in those very men he would make us believe were without spot or blemish, and as pure as virgin gold from the crucible. Not a word here respecting the war; which, if not originating with administration, has undoubtedly been long continued at their sole will and pleasure; and to which, and the innumerable other evils and impolitic measures of government, the distresses of the country are to be attributed. Happy should I be to hear that some expedient could be struck on to alleviate them. That spirit

rit of commerce, which the wary politician talks of, I fear will not be efficacious. A letter from Quebec, which I had an opportunity of perusing some days ago, holds out a dreary prospect. By this it appeared that there was not more corn there than was sufficient for the consumption of the settlement, and for seed; and that the ships sent out for cargoes would be obliged to return without them. This is certainly a deplorable circumstance, and quite contradicting to what Mr. P. holds out. In what terms shall we lament our present situation? shall we not all heartily join in saying thus, "Would to God that all was peace once more, and plenty, that the honest and industrious man could live by his labour, and enjoy once more its fruits, and the comforts of society, of which he has been so long deprived to support in place and power, profligacy and dissipation, the very worst of men." What a picture may be drawn of the calamities into which we have been plunged through the means of the present and former wicked administrations!

Can Corresponding Societies be said to have produced the consequences we deplore, when we are able to trace them back distinctly to other causes? and to such (among many of a later date) as have existed long before the period when these
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societies were formed, or even in contemplation? It is profligate and abandoned ministers, and they alone, who have to answer for all the wretchedness of the country. In the language of Mr. Peter, (who one might almost be induced to believe had, at one time, forgot the side he was engaged on) would I deplore its condition, and the vice and infamy of its ministers; and join with him in repeating "What mischiefs, O men of Britain! have they not already done—where is that harmony that gladdened our happy isle? where that tranquillity that gilded our social hours?" Alas! mad desperation has plunged you into wars—sacrificed your choicest sons—wasted oceans of your best blood—expended millions of your treasure—exhausted the funds of industry—and all for what? to multiply places, and the benefit and interests of a few unworthy individuals; to stifle the groans of those whose bitter distress is become unbearable, and to extinguish, if possible, all social affections and sympathy of soul; a compleat military system is to be established; and that of espionage to be still further extended; your existence as a free people is seriously aimed at; and your chains are at this moment in the forge.

But to conclude. These are the arguments and observations I have been induced to offer in vindica-

vindication of, what I trust will be found to be the truth; and what I conceive has been so grossly offended by the above-mentioned pamphlet. I should have replied to it earlier, had I not expected and understood it would, ere this, have been answered by another. If it should be considered that I have been too personal and severe on the author, I must observe this, that had he made use of fair argument, I would have disdained to have met him on any other ground; but his assertions are so base and malevolent that I could not trace them to any other source than *the malignity of his heart*, and therefore I could not avoid expressing sentiments I was unable to suppress:

That I may not be charged with attacking the reputation of another under a mask, or in the dark, I subscribe my name to this pamphlet; and avow the preceding pages as transcripts of the determined sentiments of

DANIEL HOWARD.

PORTSEA,
December 18, 1795.

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